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Canonization and Translation in Canada: A Case Study

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Generally, Canada is thought of as having two literatures, one anglophone, the other francophone. More often than not, the anglophone literature of Canada is perceived as the majority literature of the country and the francophone as the minority literature. As sweeping as this statement may seem, I think that it reflects both an average perception and that of many academics. The more exceptional is what E.D. Blodgett in his *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures* argues for:

> What other cultural reality does Canada have, then, but to remain a nation state, perhaps, but whose model is that of a commonwealth, a multinational society where one is always at home and abroad. That sounds, of course, utopian. Such a model is, however, necessary for any fair comparison of the Canadian literatures to be realized.[1]

I would like to take Blodgett's proposition from the argument for the approach of comparative literature in the context of English- and French-Canadian literatures and extend what is only implied in his book: the extension of the Canadian literatures from an anglophone and francophone literature to a «multicultural» literature of Canada.

Marshall McLuhan said that there is a lack of a defined national identity in Canada, there is a missing voice.[2] A senior civil servant

1. E.D. Blodgett, *Configurations: Essays on the Canadian Literatures* (Toronto, ECW Press, 1982), p. 34.

2. D. Staines, ed., *The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture.* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard UP, 1977), p. 243.

of the Secretary of State of Canada understands McLuhan's question to call upon these missing voices as the unheard voices of the Canadian ethnic literatures.[3] These two examples illustrate how the academic and the political complement each other and at the same time are prominent voices themselves in calling for the addition of the ethnic literatures of Canada to the majority literatures. This view of the Canadian literatures, certainly at least novel as far as English- and French-Canadian scholarly circles are concerned, seems also to have gained ground abroad. Walter Pache in his essay «Geschichte und Gegenwart in der Literatur Kanadas» states that

> Neben dem Konzept einer Zweisprachigen Nationalliteratur stehen andere Ansatze wie der einer 'comparative Canadian literature' oder einer Einbeziehung der Literatur Quebecs in die Gruppe von Minderheitsliteraturen und deren Emanzipation vom kolonialen Paradigma.[4]

Being aware of the problematic nature of the scholarship of the Canadian literatures and of these literatures *per se*, and as this is discussed in Blodgett's above-mentioned book, I would like to focus now on a proposition for the inclusion of the above-mentioned third component. I too, for lack of a better term, will call this third component the 'ethnic' literatures. Indeed, there is an awareness of this third component in the «configuration» of the Canadian literatures within the Canadian federal government and most provincial governments, in the political battlefield, and, although to a very limited extent, in some scholarly circles. Perhaps the most prominent propagator of this third component is the federal Multiculturalism Directorate, which was established in response to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Book IV) in 1971. It is noteworthy that the 'ethnic' literatures of Canada, although they are supported and discussed by some institutional and/or political groups, are discussed and supported by the same groups in a rather minimal way — in comparison with the support for and interest in the ethnic groups' sociological, political, and historical existence.[5] On the academic level the configuration of

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3. Judy Young, «The Unheard Voices: Ideological or Literary Identification of Canada's Ethnic Writers», *Identifications: Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada*. Jars Balan, ed. (Edmonton, The University of Alberta, The Canadian Institute of Ukranian Studies, 1982), pp. 104-115.

4. Walter Pache, «Geschichte und Gegenwart in der Literatur Kanadas», Dieter Meindl, ed., *Zur Literatur und Kultur Kanadas* (Erlangen, Palm & Enke, 1984), p. 10.

5. I should like to note that the literatures of Canada's native peoples, when they are written in other languages than English or French, are often called 'ethnic'. I think that this is for organizational or bureaucratic purposes, or because no proper designation has been found. In any case, the term 'ethnic' for such literatures is in my view wrong.

the Canadian literatures, including the ethnic literatures, has found acceptance in a recent project initiated by the University of Alberta Research Institute for Comparative Literature. The project is entitled, «Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada»[6]. In criticism where the ethnic literatures are studied in connection with English- and French-Canadian literature, Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, is still a pioneering work, although qualitatively and quantitatively slight. Nevertheless, some attempts have been made to examine literary texts, which were, although not ethnic in language, ethnic in theme and content. I mean here 'ethnic' literature written in one of Canada's majority languages. Margaret Atwood includes a chapter in her book, *Survival*, about texts by immigrant writers which have appeared in English.[7] On the other hand, and to put things into perspective, an unpublished manuscript in the possession of the Multiculturalism Directorate contains 250 pages of ethnic literatures published in Canada.[8] Because these texts were written and usually also published in Canada, they cannot be considered other than Canadian literary texts. Beyond the obvious historically determined political and sociological reasons for prejudice towards Canada's ethnic groups and beyond the scholarly determined prejudice towards these literatures measured by aesthetic considerations, the reason why these literatures have not, to date, been examined in their relation to Canada's majority literatures, or, in other words, in the context of the Canadian literatures, lies most likely in the absence of translations.

Since my postulate is to view the ethnic literatures of Canada as an integral part of the configuration of the Canadian literatures, it is necessary that a methodological framework be employed that will permit this sort of broader view of the Canadian literatures. The polysystem theory of literature is such a methodology — all the more so in that it displays an inherent emphasis on translation, which is, as proposed above, a specific problem of the Canadian literatures.

The methodological framework I propose to employ allows for an open-ended examination of the position of the ethnic literatures. This theory of literature is not an entirely novel conception. However, one can distinguish between various understandings of this view of literature. French and German critical texts of the 18th and 19th centuries (e.g. F. Schlegel) come remarkably close to a «systemic»

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6. See *Update*, no. 1, February 1987 (Edmonton, The University of Alberta Research Institute for Comparative Literature, 1987), pp. 3-6.

7. Margaret Atwood, *Survival. A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto, Anansi, 1972), pp. 145-159.

8. John Miska, *Ethnic and Native Canadian Literature* 1850-1979 (Ottawa, Multiculturalism Directorate, Secretary of State, Mss., 1980).

view of literature. In other, but related fields, such as psychology and linguistics, the works of Bertalanffy, Firth, and Wandruszka use the concept in a more established and theoretical way. However, the exact formulation of the theory began with Russian Formalists such as J. Tynjanov and V. Sklovskij in the mid-1920s. The Prague group (especially Mukarovsky and Vodicka) and later J. Lotman further developed systemic approaches. After decades of hibernation the concept was revived and further refined by the Tel Aviv group at the Porter Institute headed by I. Even-Zohar, and applied and propagated by the Leuven group of José Lambert. The concept of the polysystem theory can be found in the works of other scholars where the terminology or the concept itself is implied rather than formulated in definite descriptions. Slawinski, Durisin, and Jacques Dubois, to name a few, have postulated in their works such systemic views of literature.

For the purposes of the task at hand I have adopted and adapted polysystemic views of literature as formulated by Even-Zohar and Lambert. The most important premise in Even-Zohar's conception is that of the dichotomy of canonized and non-canonized literatures.[9] This focus in Even-Zohar's theory coincides with the Canadian situation. I think that in the case of English- and French-Canadian literature and the ethnic literatures the latter clearly belongs to the non-canonized literatures of Canada.

The concept of canonized literature is as old as literature itself. Even-Zohar's definition, originating from the Russian Formalists, is applicable to English- and French-Canadian literature. Even-Zohar writes that «by 'canonized' one means those literary norms and works (i.e. both models and texts) which are accepted as legitimate by the dominating circles within a culture and whose conspicuous products are preserved by the community to become part of its historical heritage.»[10] Non-canonized literature, on the other hand, «means those norms and texts which are rejected by the said circles as illegitimate and whose products are often forgotten in the long run by the community (unless they change their status).»[11] The crucial element in Even-Zohar's argumentation, as far as my study is concerned, lies in the following: «Canonicity is thus no inherent feature of textual activities on any level: it has nothing to do with value judgements and is no

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9. Itamar Even-Zohar, «Israeli Hebrew Literature: A Historical Model», *Papers in Historical Poetics* (Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv UP, 1978). *Papers on Poetics and Semiotics*, B. Hrushovski and I. Even-Zohar, eds., no. 8, p. 75. Also, Itamar Even-Zohar, «Polysystem Theory», *Poetics Today*, vol. 1/1-2 (1979), pp. 294-298.

10. Itamar Even-Zohar, *Polysystem Studies Papers in Historical Poetics and Semiotics of Culture* (Jerusalem-Edmonton, Mss., 1986), pp. 10-11.

11. *Ibid.*

euphemism for 'good' versus 'bad' literature.»[12] Thus, an aesthetics-oriented approach to the question of whether the ethnic literatures should or should not be studied in relation to English- and French-Canadian literature would be, in my opinion, inappropriate. In the case of English- and French-Canadian literatures, they constitute the canon. Since any canon may change due to literary or extra-literary factors, the question now is: what are the mechanisms of this change?

Lambert's concept of «importation» both illuminates Even-Zohar's concept of «determination of canonicity»[13] and can serve as a concept explaining the mechanism between the canonized anglophone and francophone Canadian literatures and the non-canonized ethnic literatures: «L'importation, *c'est-à-dire les activités, les textes non familiers* que le système littéraire importe à partir de systèmes (littéraires) voisins de toute sorte», for example, «les œuvres 'non reconnues' qui se trouvent réhabilitées»[14]. The importation of the non-canonized text, in the case of the Canadian literatures, may occur via translations. Importation into the canon via translation occurs with the aid of another level of mechanism which includes such areas as the publication industry, the political climate, and the 'paratextual'. Although Lambert's polysystemic model provides fairly elaborate instructions as to the elements of preliminary levels of importation[15], Gérard Genette's new book *Seuils* is more elaborate and conclusive. For this reason, I should like to refer to Genette's «paratexte» as the level beyond the actual translation whose features are important in the importation of a non-canonized text.[16]

Before I introduce the subject of my case study to illustrate systemic importation of one ethnic author, some remarks on the whole of that ethnic literature are appropriate. German-Canadian literature is a non-canonized, ethnic literature. Although this is an obvious statement, it is difficult to document. However, there is more than enough corroborating evidence to substantiate my opinion. For example, scholarly activity on German-Canadian studies appears in publications which often have an orientation aimed at the general and ethnic and therefore non-academic readership. Such a publication is the *German-Canadian Yearbook* which has been published since 1973. A clearly academic undertaking is the yearly Symposium of German-Canadian studies at

12. *Ibid,* p. 11.

13. Even-Zohar, 1979, *op. cit.,* p. 296.

14. José Lambert, «Un modèle descriptif pour l'étude de la littérature. La littérature comme polysystème» (Leuven, Leuven UP, no. 29, 1983), p. 17.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris, Seuil, 1987).

the Learned Societies' conferences, the papers of which are published by the University of Montréal. There are individual academics at Canadian universities who study and are devoted to the field of German-Canadian literature. At the same time it is not without significance that the above-mentioned publications are financially supported by the Multiculturalism Directorate in Ottawa, an indication that the multiculturalism policy, as a more or less political institution, takes active part in the systemic development of German-Canadian Studies. In other words, the very existence of German-Canadian Studies means political involvement by the state. On the other hand, it is safe to assume that German-Canadian Studies would probably not exist without government help. The institutional character, that is, the institutionalization of German-Canadian studies, is of course in the context of the polysystem theory not negative, because it aids the expansion of the existing literary canon. It is my opinion that governmental support for German-Canadian studies is essentially different in nature from the support the government provides for other, non-ethnic fields of study and publications.

The view from Germany proper means of course another level of the literary canon. Without wanting to diverge, let it suffice to say that the relationship between German literature and German-Canadian literature is conceptually the same as the one between the ethnic literatures and English- and French-Canadian literature. At the same time I would like to note that it is remarkable how early scholars in Germany paid attention to German-Canadian literature. Karl Kurt Klein's *Literaturgeschichte des Deutschtums im Ausland* with a chapter on German-Canadian literature appeared in 1939.[17] Of course, it should be noted that the attention given to expatriate Germans and their literary achievements came at a time when this was a direct political concern of the Germany of that time.

To illustrate Lambert's concept of «importation» and by it the mechanism of canonization, however limitedly, I will now introduce the example of the German-Canadian author Walter Bauer. Of course, it would be more conclusive to illustrate the position of German-Canadian literature within the Canadian literatures by a large number of German-Canadian belletristic texts. But Bauer is still a paradigmatic case and may serve well as an initial examination of questions raised in this paper.

Bauer came to Canada in the early 1950's, already an accomplished and published author of novels, poetry, and short stories in Germany. He was in his early years strongly supported by the interna-

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17. Karl Kurt Klein, *Literaturgeschichte des Deutschtums im Ausland* (Leipzig, 1939; rpt. Hildesheim-New York, Georg Olms, 1979).

tionally known and popular Stefan Zweig, who became one of his admirers in the turmoils of the late 30s.[18] He could be seen as the prototype of the successful Canadian immigrant, as Professor Henry Beissel describes him in the 1976 preface (the 'paratexte') of a translation of Bauer's poetry.[19] He began his career in Canada as a dishwasher and ended it as a university professor.[20] His literary production was large. He published about twenty-six books, in addition to works of a scholarly or belletristic nature in magazines, newspapers, and journals. While it is true that most of his prose was published before he came to Canada, his productivity did not decrease after his arrival in Canada, although there was a shift towards poetry.[21] Nine of Bauer's post-Germany books are specifically Canadian in content.[22] This numerical fact alone certainly places him within the Canadian literatures. Bauer's perhaps most important books in that context are his translated volumes of poetry, *The Price of Morning* (1968) and *A Different Sun* (1976).

I will now employ Lambert's model for describing translation within the polysystem theory of literature.[23] The following observations are truisms. However, in the scheme of Lambert's methodology such obvious data are integral. In addition, Genette's new theoretical study on the significance of titles, prefaces, the name of the author (the 'paratexte'), etc. underlines Lambert's model.

The title page and publication data give the first impression of a book when read and the reader 'categorizes' the book accordingly, i.e. he/she will position it in her/his own hierarchy of canon. The arrangement of the printed matter on the page, front and back, is usually conventional. However, the author and the publisher do have choices. These options are significant because their selection is based on factors (print and visual appearance) which the reader will perceive within his/her literary hierarchy.

Bauer's first translated volume of poetry appeared in 1968, the second in 1976, after his death. In the earlier volume (1968) on the

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18. Donald A. Prater, *Stefan Zweig Das Leben eines Ungeduldigen*, tr. Annelie Hohenemser (Frankfurt, Fischer, 1984), pp. 155 & 385.

19. Walter Bauer, *A Different Sun*. Tr. Henry Beissel (Toronto, Oberon, 1976), p. 5.

20. Walter Bauer (1976), p. 5.

21. See the bibliography and 'Contents' in Walter Bauer, *The Price of Morning*, Tr. Henry Beissel (Vancouver, Prism International Press, University of British Columbia, 1968).

22. Walter Bauer, *A Different Sun* (1976), preface by Henry Beissel.

23. For the model, see José Lambert and Hendrik van Gorp, «On Describing Translations», Theo Hermans, ed., *The Manipulation of Literature. Essays on Translated Literature* (London, Croom Helm, 1985).

left page beside the title page there is a photograph of Walter Bauer. In the second volume (1976) the title «A Different Sun» is printed across both left and title pages. The arrangements of printed matter on the two title pages are evidently different. The 1968 volume attains a balance between the author and the translator, and the author is also visually introduced. On the back-cover of the 1968 volume we find the information that the book was published in some capacity under the auspices of an academic institution. This is not the case in the later volume. On the title page of the 1976 volume the author's name figures in a prominent position, in larger print than that of the translator. In the earlier volume the names of the two are equal in size, although the author is mentioned first (as this is a convention). Also, in this volume the title is qualified by 'Selected Poems'. In the later volume no such qualification appears.

The 1968 volume contains both source text and target text, thirty-five poems in translation and in the original. Out of these thirty-five, only ten are previously unpublished poems. The original texts of the remaining twenty-five had already been published in Germany.[24] There is a seven-page introduction in this volume in English only, written by the translator, Henry Beissel. It consists mainly of biographical information, but there is also some information on the publishing history of Bauer's works. In the back of the volume there is a short 'credo' written by the translator on the duties and responsibilities of the translator, as well as biographical data on the translator himself. The book was not only supported by the University of British Columbia[25] but it received a financial subsidy from the Canada Council.[26]

The later volume (1976) begins with a non-designated text in English, a sort of preface or introduction. This section is three pages long and deals with Bauer's biography, and, in contrast to the 1968 volume, contains an evaluative approach to Bauer's works in general. Specificity is apparent in that it contains references to Bauer's later works (nine books in particular) which have Canadian content. The point that Bauer is both a Canadian and universal poet is made several times by the author, Henry Beissel. This volume contains seventy poems, in the target language only. The table of contents is in the back of the book — in the 1968 volume it is at the beginning of the volume. Both volumes were published in hard cover, in cloth.

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24. See reference information on p. 9 related to the bibliography in the back of the volume.

25. See back of title page.

26. Bauer (1968), p. 9.

In both volumes the text is divided and organized according to the spacing of the poems as self-contained spatial units. When possible (i.e. with shorter poems), one poem appeared on one page. In the volume with source and target text (1968), the source text is on the left-hand pages and thus is positioned to draw the reader's attention immediately. The source text is the primary text by its space allocation and is meant to be compared with the translations. In the second volume (1976) the poems are allocated one page each if they fit onto one page, but otherwise they continue on the next page. Thus the text in the later volume (1976) is *a priori* the primary, i.e. target, text.

Another element of the Bauer-translation strategies is the selection of cloth/hard cover bindings for the volumes. This may indicate an intention to aim at a more select readership, such as institutions and a well-read, well-to-do readership.

Bauer's poetry is clearly being 'imported' into the polysystem of the Canadian literatures. This is evident not only in the publication strategies, the introductory rhetoric of the translator, the support of academic and government institutions, and last but not least by the readership the volumes are aimed at, but also in the different strategies of the two volumes. The above description indicates that the 1968 volume was constructed clearly with the fact in mind that Bauer was an unknown for the Canadian reader. This volume thus was aimed at a bilingual Canadian readership. The second volume could already count on a limited readership and thus the changed strategy.

Beyond the importation of Bauer's poetry into the Canadian canon via translation, another level deserves attention. This is his inclusion into Canadian reference works. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (1984) lists Bauer.[27] But it is noteworthy that the entry is provided by John Robert Colombo, who published *Colombo's Canadian References* (with an entry on Bauer) and *The Poets of Canada* (with an entry on Bauer).[28] John Robert Colombo is also editor of the *Tamarack Review*, which in 1977-78 published translated poetry by Bauer.[29] The translator of these poems is again Henry Beissel. Thus it is obvious that Bauer's importation is due to just a few individuals who recognized his importance as a poet. But it is also obvious that these individuals had to employ institutional means to introduce, in a

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27. William Toye, gen. ed., *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (Toronto-Oxford-New York, 1983.) pp. 45-46.

28. John Robert Colombo, *Colombo's Canadian References* (Toronto-London-New York, Oxford UP, 1976), pp. 32-33. John Robert Colombo, ed., *The Poets of Canada* (Edmonton, Hurtig, 1978), pp. 117-118.

29. *The Tamarack Review* (1977/78; double number, 1979), pp. 14-24, 25-34.

planned and systematic way, Bauer's poetry into the determined canon of the Canadian literatures.

On the textual level there are also strategies which are in relation to the concept of the canon and importation. For a short but representative description of strategies on this level I shall use the text of Bauer's «Canada» poem from the 1968 volume. It is immediately apparent that the translator rendered the source text in a linear fashion. There is an obvious effort on his part to maintain the exact order and sequence of words, even punctuation. This strategy results in a somewhat tenuous English. The presence of the source text in this volume causes the bilingual reader to focus rather on the source text. This is also spatially and visually reinforced since it is the left-hand page the reader reads first, and on this page are the German poems. But beyond this obvious reaction of the reader, some above-mentioned elements on the translation level indicate a certain source-text orientation anyway (e.g. the pronounced mention of the text being a translation from the German, which could have been suppressed on the title page). To the bilingual reader the presence of the source text is important for another reason: the source text, mainly because of the translation's linearity, is more alive, expressive, dynamic. There are no detectable different language levels between the source text and the target text. It seems to me that thought (content) was thus maintained at the cost of poetic expression.

In conclusion, the example of Bauer's legitimization, i.e. canonization, which I have attempted to illustrate by a description of the mechanisms of this legitimization, may be considered an exception only. Of course, the theory I employed and the case for its illustration are tentative and raise several questions. At the same time, I see the value of the polysystem theory in the possibility of its employment for an innovative view of the Canadian literatures when not only a 'program' can be conceptualized for the legitimization of the ethnic literatures, but also the study of these literatures may be made possible in relation with English- and French-Canadian literature.

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